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ABSTRACT

There are two levels of planning: strategic and operational. Strategic planning takes place at the upper levels of management and relates to the longrange objectives of an organization. Operational planning takes place at the middle, or lower, management echelon and deals with the implementation of strategic plans. It is the task of the chief administrator to assemble a planning staff and to give support and guidance to its efforts. The administrator must also assure that the proper planning organization is created and that it functions effectively in order that strategic and operational plans be developed. (RA)

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PLANNING FOR THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATION

By Andy Nutt

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PLANNING FOR THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATION

THE NATURE OF PLANNING

During the late 1960s a chief school administrator, in trying to get support for long-range planning, pointed out to his Board of Education that planning had been tried in business and industry for the past ten years. Indeed, the most active use of formalized planning came about in business during the late 1950s and in the 1960s; however, business planning was described by Henri Fayol as early as 1916. World War II gave impetus to formalized planning as every effort was made to marshal and utilize all available resources.

Educators have also seen the benefits of planning for their business. Some were interested in and talked about planning from the standpoint of the educational experiences of youngsters, both on a day-to-day basis and over the period of a year or two. Still others saw the great technological development taking place in this country and the world and felt a need to plan for its use across all aspects of education. Most educators have realized the need for wise utilization of resources in the educational effort and now see formalized planning as an effective means to achieve that goal.

Planning is a function of management, and managers are beginning to realize that it is one of the most important aspects or considerations.

LeBreton says, "The planning activity is characterized as being the core of the management process with all other functions ultimately dependent upon it." (3, p. 22) George Steiner points out that planning the future is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of the management process. This could be because, as one chief executive notes, "In our planning cycle we 'invent' our future." (13, p. 135) Or, as Newell says, "Planning is to a large extent the job of making things happen that would not otherwise occur." (4, p. 9)

At times, planning for the future is confused with forecasting. Steiner points out that, "Forecasts are essential in planning, but they are not planning nor plans." (5, p. 17) Forecasts provide the bases from which plans can be developed. They are ingredients for plan making. One of the more interesting forecasting activities is that at the Educational Policy Research Center at Syracuse University which is under the direction of Dr. Warren Ziegler. This group of researchers is concerned with forecasting for purposes of educational planning.

It must be assumed that all men and all organizations do some planning at some level of sophistication. Steiner notes that "the universe of planning is an enormous one. ---frequently the discussion of planning focuses on one segment of this world without specifying it. One result, sometimes, is that confusion arises because what is correct in one type of planning may be incorrect in another." (5, p. 11) It is difficult to understand the complexity

of planning until one has a technique or theory for determining and classifying the many aspects of the function.

The Planning Context

The context of planning efforts in general can be classified by the setting in which planning takes place or by the subject that describes the purpose for which planning must be accomplished. The context of educational planning would be that of subject while urban planning would be classified according to setting. If one is dealing with the development of urban area schools, it would be possible to classify the context as either setting or subject or both.

Educational planning is only one aspect of a comprehensive plan for the development of our environment and society. It must be viewed and pursued in the total context if it is to be successful in achieving its purposes. Educational planning must relate to urban planning, to environmental planning, to financial planning, and to other efforts that are likely to have some immediate or long-range impact on its goals.

> "The time is past when any one segment of governmental service should be separated from the others in developing plans and proposals for the future. Education, as one major phase of governmental services....should be involved in and be interrelated with the planning for the organization and structure for all governmental services in a rapidly changing society." (6, p. 134)

While educational planning is a part of a more complex whole, it can also be comprehensive within itself. The parts that compose

comprehensive educational planning tend to be viewed differently among those who seek to become involved in planning. While these differencies may not limit the outcomes or benefits of planning, they do cause confusion in communication about the planning effort. Sometimes these differencies may cause one to become confused about the exact nature of the planning which must be accomplished.

The Dimensions of Planning

Informal Planning:

There are two types of planning: informal and formal. Informal or intuitive planning is the most common because it is practiced by almost everyone. "It is based on experience, a 'feel" for a situation, and deep understanding of events." (13, p. 133). The processes used in this approach are unknown. Harold Henry notes that, "This informal long-range planning (for business) is usually done verbally by top executives at irregular time intervals and is characterized by a lack of systematic planning procedures." (2, p. 11)

One of the main advantages to informal planning is the rapidity with which plans can be altered or abandoned as the operation develops. This is also one of its greatest weaknesses because the plans are often greatly altered or abandoned before sufficient inquiry has been made about the operational situation.

Formal Planning:

Formal or organized planning is rapidly being adopted by both business and governmental organizations.

> "This type is frequently done by many people in a company on the bases of a procedure that is laid down beforehand. It generally results in a written set of plans. It is sometimes called long-range planning, comprehensive planning, integrated planning, overall planning, or corporate planning." (13, p. 133)

Ringbakk points out that "The foremost objective of organized corporate planning is the improvement of management's performance by making managers analyze in a systematic manner all the interacting variables making up the total corporate system before making decisions." (11, pp. 46-57)

World War II has been credited with the development of formalized long-range planning. But other factors have contributed to the more recent increased emphasis on systematic long-range planning. First, organizations have continued to grow rapidly in size. Second, management has become very complex in recent years. Third, the level of expenditure for research and development has rapidly increased, and the resulting technological changes and new products have exceeded expectations. A fourth reason is the need to ration limited funds among an increasing number of worthwhile opportunities. Finally, the manner in which the federal government expends its funds has forced the recipients to plan more systematically. If an organization does not plan, it may not be in a position to wisely use these funds, or it may not be in a position to maintain itself should such funding be denied.

Steiner says the essential characteristics of formal planning are that plans are prepared on some time cycle on the basis of procedures, properly structured, comprehensive, developed by many people in a cooperative effort covering a lengthy time span, and well written. (5, p. 14) It should be noted that formal planning can take place without the cooperative effort of many people; however, the usefulness of such plans is certainly questionable.

Since formal planning is based on the use of specific procedures and careful structuring and ends in a written plan, this type is usually the major focus of any planning study.

The Levels of Planning

Strategic Planning:

Strategic planning takes place at the upper levels of management and relates to the long-range objectives of the organization. Steiner says,

> "Strategic Planning is the process of determining the major objectives of an organization and the policies and strategies that will govern the acquisition, use, and disposition of resources to achieve those objectives. Objectives in the strategic planning process include missions or purposes, if they have not been determined previously, and the specific objectives that are sought by a firm." (5, p. 34)

Other names for strategic or strategy planning are top management planning, long-range planning, and comprehensive corporate planning.

Peter Drucker says that long-range planning is:

> "The continuous process of making present entrepreneurial decisions systematically and with the best possible knowledge of their futurity, organizing systematically the efforts needed to carry out these decisions, and measuring the results of these decisions against the expectations through organized, systematic feed-back." (9, p. 240)

As might be expected, strategic planning must go outside the organization for much of the information and areas of knowledge that can be used in designing the organization's future. The results of such planning are difficult to assess because they become evident only after a period of years. Yet, strategic planning is the point of origin for all other planning which may take place in an organization. Some of the major problems that are exhibited in the development of effective plans are created because an adequate distinction has not been made between the levels of planning responsibility.

Operational Planning:

Operational planning is often called tactical planning, middle or lower management planning, or short-range planning. This level of planning deals with the implementation of strategic plans. Operational plans include the operating procedures necessary for the employment of resources to accomplish the strategic objectives.

Operational planning may be pursued in many places rather than centralized within an organization. This is not to say that some clear cut procedures are not needed for this practice to be efficient.

It simply recognizes that in reality one must be prepared to place the action where it is needed in order to produce the desired results.

THE PLANNER ROLE

A clear concept of the role of the planner is needed for the planning effort to be successful. As one examines various organizations, it is possible to find many titles listed on the doors behind which the planning function is performed. Usually these individuals also perform many management functions in addition to planning. It seems important, therefore, that the role of the planner be described.

The Positions and Titles of the Planner

Preston LeBreton notes that "planning logically ought to be among the last of the administrative functions to be delegated to subordinates." (3, p. 177) This would appear to be the general trend, especially among smaller organizations. Raoul Berteaux, looking at the international picture, says:

> "In a small and little diversified enterprise the head of the company may not need a formal long range planning group, but he must in this case take over the role of long range planner himself because the menaces brought about by constant changes are just as large for a small undiversified enterprise as for the large, well diversified multi-national companies." (7, p. 33)

As a company becomes larger, it is necessary for the chief administrator to delegate administrative responsibility, including the responsibility for planning. Ringbakk, in reporting on forty major U. S. companies, says, "The task of initially preparing a long-range

plan is usually a responsibility of line management assisted by staff planners. Only one in ten of the chief executives were reported to participate in the original development of the plans." (11, p. 51) Steiner reports that: "Increasingly, one individual is given responsibility to see that the formal corporate planning process proceeds as desired. He is called the corporate planner." (13, p. 134) Other titles which are often used to designate the corporate planner are planning coordinator, vice president for corporate development, director of development planning, and special assistant to the president for planning.

The responsibility for planning may be passed directly down the line to branch managers or department heads. While it is very important that these line managers be involved in strategic planning, it is not logical for them to be responsible for this top management planning. Their planning responsibility should be limited to operational planning.

The Functions Assigned to the Planner

Corporate planners "stimulate the use of new tools, methods, and ideas." "They are now looked upon as managers of the planning process rather than 'planning mastermind'. The planner sees to it that the planning is done rather than doing it himself." (13, p. 133)

Harold Henry looked at long-range planning in 45 industrial companies and found that most planners were responsible for coordinating

planning; reviewing divisional plans for inconsistencies, deficiencies, areas of low profitability or attractive and new investment opportunities, and analyzing potential new ventures for the organization. In these companies, the planner was not responsible for developing divisional long-range plans nor for final approval of the corporate long-range plans. (2, p. 30)

Steiner says:

> "Planners are increasingly becoming the bridge between specialists in the management sciences and top executives whose education and career paths did not expose them to the newer mathematical tools." (10, p. 135)

> "He not only sees that objectives are established, but helps management shape them and the strategies to achieve them. He is increasingly an activist who exerts himself personally to get change implemented, rather than a passive 'ivory tower' researcher who only pushes out paper analyses." (13, p. 135)

It is obvious that the planner role being addressed here is that of the strategic planner. This is the person who has been made responsible for the development of formal plans which will guide the organization. The operational planner is usually the middle manager. He not only develops plans which will be consistent with the strategic plans, but he is also responsible for the implementation of these plans. Depending upon the size of the operating unit, he may also have staff assistance in the development of these plans.

PLANNING FUNCTION IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

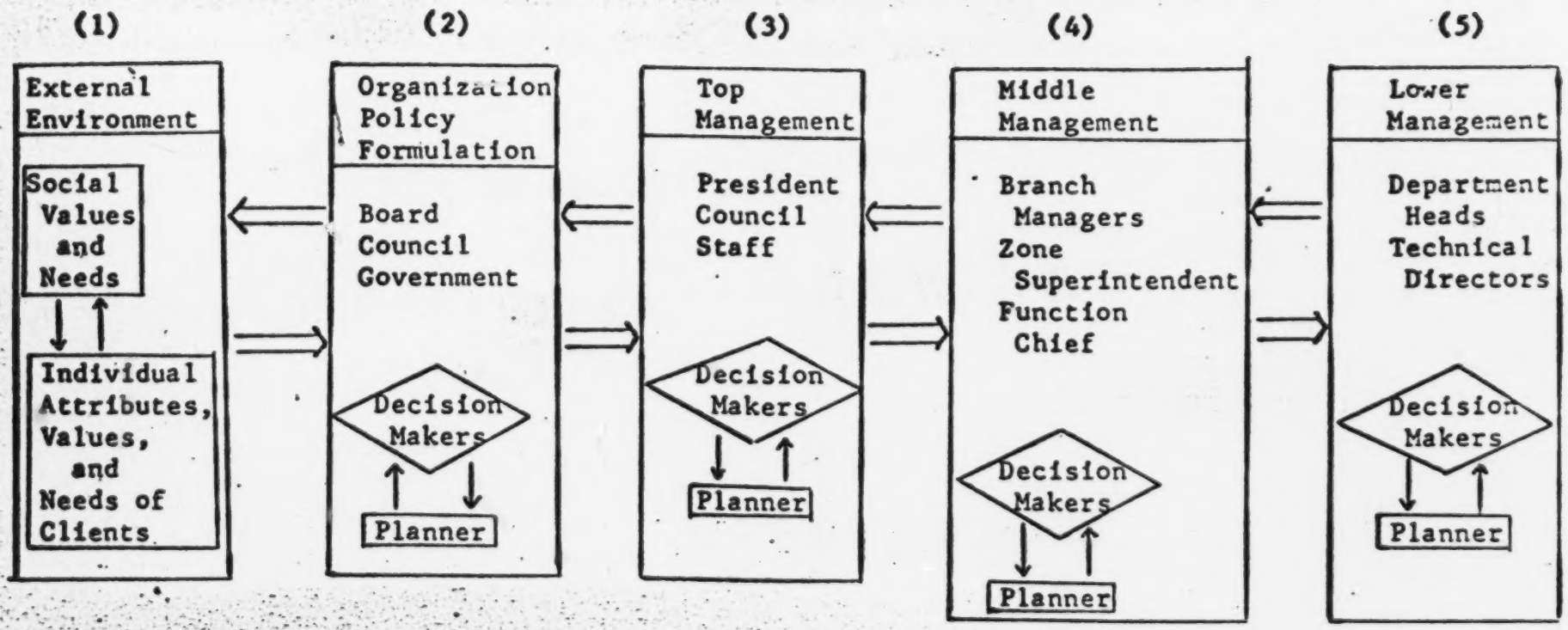

FIGURE 1

At this point, Figure 1 may be useful in clarifying the conceptual relations between the strategic planning functions and operational planning functions at various levels in the hierarchical structure of an organization. At level one, External Environment, the relationship is made between the organization and the context of its existence. At level two, Organization Policy Formulation, strategic planning for making this relationship beneficial takes place. While this level may or may not have a designated planner, the policies which are developed constitute the written plans that guide other parts of the organization. In most cases, these policies are developed by the top management of the organization for approval by the policy level.

The major part of strategic planning takes place at level three, Top Management. One could conceptually categorize this level of planning as operationalizing the strategic plans of level two. However, in most references to corporate planning or strategic planning, one finds that the top management level is being addressed. Planning at this level deals primarily with the development of strategies for maintaining the organization in a healthy, progressive condition.

Middle Management, level four, becomes the first level of operational planning as viewed from level three. This level is charged with developing plans for the implementation of level three's strategic plans. However, at level four, the planner is developing

strategic plans for meeting the responsibilities which have been assigned to Middle Management by Top Management. This same cycle moves down to Lower Management where the planner does strategic planning for operationalizing the operational plans of Middle Management.

The extent to which one can classify the planner's activity as strategic or operational planning depends upon the complexity of the organization and the extent to which it is dispersed in its operations. The key to such classification seems to depend upon the extent to which the plans are tied to the external environment as opposed to the internally generated plans at higher levels of the organization.

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING PLANS

LeBreton says, "A plan must involve the future, action, and personal or organizational identification or causation." (2, p. 7) The development of a written plan which would meet this criteria can be approached in a variety of ways. Some would be effectively and efficiently produced while others would be to the contrary. While there is no best way of approaching this task, it may be useful to explore some of the approaches which have been used.

The Organization for Planning

There seems to be three basic approaches to formalizing a planning function within an organization: (1) form planning committees, (2) establishment of a planning staff, and (3) use of both of these

as a combined strategy. Henry reported that "Some formal planning organizations failed when they were first introduced. The type of organization which was most likely to become ineffective was one which included only a long-range planning committee, but no full-time staff planners." (2, p. 145) He also noted that some corporate planning staffs were short-lived because they assumed a centralized, paternalistic planning role.

Apparently, the organization which is most likely to be lasting is that which uses both planning committees and a planning staff. This alone, however, does not assure success. A successful organization must have a sound philosophy of management, clearly-defined planning assignments for both staff planners and line managers, and personnel who are competent and cooperative.

Large and small organizations differ in the complexity of their planning machinery as do centralized and decentralized companies. A large organization will likely have a small staff of highly specialized planners, while a small company will depend upon its chief executives with perhaps one or two specialists. The centralized company will have a central planning staff with the divisional managers conducting the planning at their levels. The decentralized company will have a central planning staff with strong, divisional planning groups.

The internal organization of a planning staff will depend upon the competencies of the individuals on the staff, as well as the nature

of responsibilities assigned to the planning group. Where the nature of the business is homogeneous, the planning may be organized with respect to the key functions of the business. If the business is heterogeneous, the planning may be organized according to the various products to be produced. Often the planning organization will center around analysis of the business environment, analysis of strategies and resource potentials, analysis of management activities, and analysis of present products and future development.

The Steps in Plan Making

There are many different viewpoints as to how plans should be made. Some of these viewpoints include concepts or points which would not be included as steps in plan making. Dean Bowman lists eight basic concepts for what he considers successful planning: "(1) Planning must be formalized and continuous, (2) Planning must establish objectives and goals, (3) Planning must relate appropriate resources to objectives, (4) Planning must be flexible, (5) Those who carry out the plans must also participate in the formation of those plans, (6) Short-term plans should be part of and relate to long-term plans, (7) Projects should be 'laddered' e.g. on a return on investment basis, and (8) It is doing the plans rather than the plan itself that is of consequence." (8, p. 66)

While some of these concepts are steps in the development of a plan, others are considerations which must be given in the implementation of a plan. Vancil, in discussing the process of planning,

lists seven points which are inclusive of the major steps in plan making. These are: "(1) Problem analysis, (2) Identification of goals, (3) Developing objectives, (4) Design of alternatives for reaching objectives, (5) Evaluation of alternatives, (6) Recommend course to be pursued, and (7) Monitor effectiveness of action." (16, pp. 98-101)

Among educational planners, the most generally accepted steps in planning are the following: (1) Problem identification, (2) Goal setting, (3) Objective specification, (4) Identification of alternatives, (5) Selection of alternatives, (6) Selection of evaluation method, (7) Implementation procedures, and (8) Recycle procedures. In the educational area, there are two tasks which are a part of problem identification--needs assessment and priority setting. While resources identification and allocation are not set forth in the above steps, these tasks must be performed as a part of steps four, five and seven.

APPLICATION OF BUSINESS PLANNING TO EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

There are many aspects of business planning as well as many aspects of educational planning. The aspects of business planning to be discussed here are those which have been previously mentioned. The aspects of educational planning to be considered here are those which relate to state education agencies and to local school districts.

Informal and Formal Planning

In relation to the dimensions of planning, state education agencies and local school districts are engaged in, and should continue to engage in, informal planning. This informal planning should be based upon a solid support of formal strategic and operational planning. The formal plans of these educational institutions are not developed to increase investment opportunities in the business sense. They are developed to increase the quality of the educational program provided for students and to increase the efficiency of the processes used to provide this type of educational program.

Strategic and Operational Planning

The process of strategic and operational planning will vary according to the size and complexity of the school district or state agency organization. It will also vary according to the management approaches which are favored by the chief administrator. It would be impossible to select "the best" way for a school district or state education agency to do strategic or operational planning. It is critical, however, that these organizations perform both strategic and operational planning.

The main goal of the elementary and secondary educational system is not the spending of a preallocated amount of funds, although the present extent of planning would often lead to that conclusion. The task of educational planning is to provide ways and means for "diffusing knowledge" to produce an informed citizenry capable of contributing to their own well-being as well as that of the general

society. What strategies can be employed over twelve to twenty years which would produce this? How can these strategies be kept current, sequenced, and operationalized year by year?

If plans for these goals are to be accomplished, it is essential that the chief administrator lend his support, participation, and guidance to the effort. Planning is the responsibility of the chief administrator and cannot be totally delegated to a planning staff. He must assure that the proper organization for planning is created, that the way in which it is to function is clear and is understood by all, and that it operates effectively and efficiently. There must be a clear understanding of the difference between strategic planning and operational planning.

Funding Pattern and Planning

For the most part, educational financing does not permit the staffs of school districts and state education agencies to do complete strategic planning. It is difficult to select appropriate strategies to be employed without a forecast of resources which can be committed to implementing a strategy. With the exception of bond financing for capital improvements and the limited amount of surplus resources which may be accumulated, the school districts are forced to operate with the resources which can be generated during the current operating period. Available financing from state and local sources can be forecast with some degree of accuracy in most cases. However, the use of these funds are largely predetermined.

State funds are made available to pay salaries of personnel, to buy transportation services, to provide for maintenance of facilities and equipment, to provide special education for handicapped children, to provide vocational education, etc. The use of federal funds which are made available is subject to even more specifications. While this type of funds allocation hinders adequate strategic and operational planning, it is also the very factor which makes both types of planning extremely important to the educational system.

Program Planning and Budgeting

One of the current planning tools which has gained much attention in educational circles is Program Planning and Budgeting Systems. This is commonly talked about in terms of strategic planning, but in its limited implementation, it serves operational planning. Hopefully, it serves operational planning in a broader capacity than just an accounting procedure which benefits the controller or auditor. It should provide an avenue for relating short-range operational plans and activities to the long-range strategic plans.

Centralized or Decentralized

A school district or state education agency may approach its strategic planning in one of two ways, depending upon the basic management plan of the organization. The operational units may be decentralized with much autonomy, or they may be largely responsive to a central management.

A district may be highly centralized with the central staff not only planning the long-range strategies but also being responsible for the operational planning. The principal in such a case can be compared to a foreman. In such circumstances, the central staff often becomes so engrossed in operational planning that they neglect strategic planning. The central staff in such an organization should include a planning staff and a planning committee composed of representatives from all operational units. The planning staff should be responsible for the development of the strategic plans with the advice and assistance of the planning committee. This planning staff should be directly responsible to the Superintendent.

A decentralized educational organization usually has a central staff for strategic planning and coordination. The operating units have administrative staffs which provide for the operational planning. Some aspects of operational planning are retained with the central staff, i.e., personnel and finance. While some districts have used the principal as a branch manager, in most cases the real responsibility for planning has remained with the central staff. Some districts are now employing the concept of zone superintendents which is more in line with the theory of decentralized organizations. It will be very important under this organizational structure that the chief administrator clearly define the planning functions to be performed by the various administrative units.

Perhaps, under the decentralized organization which provides for zone superintendents, the General Superintendent's staff should

be largely a coordinating body with the major responsibility for strategic planning. A planning committee should also be created to include the zone superintendents and selected members of the central staff. Each of the zone staffs should provide not only for operational planning, but also for long-range development of an educational program related to the students within that zone. This long-range planning should be interrelated by the central staff to the overall strategy of the total district.

Further provision for planning would have to be made at the zone level to assure adequate and appropriate planning at the campus level. At this point, the planning situation can again become one of a centralized organization or it can be structured to provide for further decentralization. One of the major keys to the location of operational planning is the manner in which a decision can be made regarding the purpose for which funds are expended.

Conclusion

In planning, the question is not "What shall we do tomorrow;" but, rather, "What must we do today in order to be ready for tomorrow?" This study points out that an organization must go through the process of developing written strategic and operational plans which can guide the future actions of the organization. The plans do not necessarily have to be accurate, as Vancil pointed out, but they must be developed.

The process of developing plans is more important than the accuracy of the plans. The organizational staff should be involved in the process of planning. This is important for the motivation of those who will implement the plans; but, perhaps more significantly, it causes the managers who are involved in planning to look ahead and consider the effect their assigned tasks have upon the larger organization.

Even more critical to the organizational planning effort is the commitment of the chief executive. The chief executive sets the direction for an organization. He and the other top executives must be actively and sincerely interested in and provide leadership for the accomplishment of the planning activity. Henry noted that "Top executives don't want to do planning, but don't want to let loose of the reins enough to get adequate help." (2, p. 80) This is like refusing to hire an auditor for fear the accounting system is inadequate. The chief executive must lead---not be driven.

Educational organizations of every magnitude must plan. This planning must be systematic and comprehensive. It must provide for strategic as well as operational plans. The experiences of businessmen and the theories of management specialists can provide useful insights to educators. They can help educators avoid some of the pitfalls that have trapped businesses and successful practices can be adapted to the business of education.

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